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FIGHTING-CONGRESSMEN (3 TAKES)

CONGRESSMEN SAY U.S. INVOLVED IN COVERT ACTIVITIES

By DAVID HUME

WASHINGTON, April 13, REUTER - Two congressmen who visited Central America this week charged today there is no doubt the federal government "is deeply involved in covert activities" aimed at overthrowing the Nicaraguan government.

"We deplore this action because we believe it violates the law which Congress passed last year forbidding such actions," said Rep. Berkley Bedell, an Iowa Democrat, reading from a prepared statement.

Last year Congress passed the Boland amendment which bars the use of Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) funds for the purpose of overthrowing Nicaragua's Sandinista government.

Rep. Robert Torricelli, a New Jersey Democrat, said interviews conducted in Nicaragua and Honduras showed "the evidence is overwhelming" that the anti-Sandinista rebels are trained and supported by the United States.

He added that the U.S. ambassador to Honduras, John Negroponte, had described the Boland amendment as a "legal triviality" that should not stand in the way of U.S. interests in the region.

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47AM-FIGHTING-CONGRESSMEN 2 WASHINGTON

THE REAGAN ADMINISTRATION HAS SAID IT IS OBEYING BOTH THE LETTER AND THE SPIRIT OF THE BOLAND AMENDMENT.

FORMER DEMOCRATIC SEN. DICK CLARK OF IOWA, A MEMBER OF THE DELEGATION, SAID "THERE IS NO LONGER ANY QUESTION OF THE COVERT INVOLVEMENT" OF THE U.S. GOVERNMENT IN NICARAGUA.

CLARK, DIRECTOR OF FOREIGN POLICY AT THE ASPEN INSTITUTE, A PRIVATE RESEARCH ORGANIZATION, TOLD REPORTERS THE ALLEGED COVERT ACTIVITY "PROVES TO LATIN AMERICA THAT THE UNITED STATES HAS EMBARKED ONCE AGAIN ON A POLICY OF INTERVENTION."

THE CONGRESSMEN URGED FELLOW HOUSE MEMBERS TO SUPPORT ACTION BY REP. MICHAEL BARNES, A MARYLAND DEMOCRAT, "TO STOP THIS SECRET WAR IN NICARAGUA."

A HOUSE FOREIGN AFFAIRS SUBCOMMITTEE YESTERDAY ADOPTED A MEASURE PROPOSED BY BARNES WHICH WOULD DENY U.S. SUPPORT FOR GROUPS OPPOSING THE NICARAGUAN GOVERNMENT UNLESS REQUESTED BY THE PRESIDENT AND APPROVED BY A JOINT CONGRESSIONAL RESOLUTION.

AT THE WHITE HOUSE TODAY, SPOKESMAN LARRY SPEAKES SAID YESTERDAY'S VOTE WOULD RESTRICT THE ADMINISTRATION'S CONDUCT OF FOREIGN POLICY BUT "IS NOT BY ANY MEANS THE FINAL VOTE."

HE SAID "WE HAVE SOME DEGREE OF CONFIDENCE" THAT THE VOTE WILL BE REVERSED.

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***FAM-FIGHTING-CONGRESSMEN 3 WASHINGTON

IN ANOTHER DEVELOPMENT, SEN. GARY HART OF COLORADO, A CONTENDER FOR THE 1984 DEMOCRATIC PRESIDENTIAL NOMINATION, INTRODUCED A NON-BINDING SENATE RESOLUTION TODAY WHICH WOULD DECLARE THAT U.S. SUPPORT OF NICARAGUAN INSURGENTS IS ILLEGAL AND SHOULD STOP.

HE SAID ADMINISTRATION POLICY "VIOLATES AMERICAN LAW, FUELS THE WAR, UNDERMINES STABILITY THROUGHOUT CENTRAL AMERICA AND DAMAGES OUR CREDIBILITY AS PEACEMAKERS IN THE REGION."

THE RESOLUTION STATES THE ADMINISTRATION KNOWS THE INSURGENTS ARE TRYING TO OVERTHROW NICARAGUA'S GOVERNMENT AND SO THE U.S. AID VIOLATES THE LAW PROHIBITING U.S. EFFORTS TO OVERTHROW THAT GOVERNMENT.

ANOTHER MEMBER OF THE CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION WHICH VISITED THE AREA, FORMER U.S. AMBASSADOR TO EL SALVADOR AND HONDURAS ROBERT WHITE, SAID NICARAGUA HAD ACTED PRUDENTLY IN NOT ATTACKING REBEL CAMPS IN NEIGHBORING HONDURAS.

HE ALSO SAID THE DELEGATION'S IMPRESSION WAS THE SALVADORAN GOVERNMENT WOULD FALL BEFORE THE END OF THE YEAR, DESPITE U.S. AID.

"MY GUESS IS THAT 50 PER CENT OF THE ARMS THAT WE SEND THEM WILL END UP IN THE HANDS OF REBELS," HE SAID.

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